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Work Space | office design profile

Philadelphia Business Journal

COMPANY: **Floss Barber Inc.**

TYPE: Interior design firm.

PROJECT: Redesign of Floss Barber's office space .

WHERE: 1420 Locust St., Suite 310, Philadelphia.

SQUARE FEET: 3,500.

ARCHITECT: Floss Barber Inc.

GOALS OF DESIGN: Floss Barber of the eponymous design firm knew she needed a change.

She bought an office condominium at Academy House five years ago, and used her gut when she fitted out the space. For example, Barber put her desk near the front door, though it wasn't for aesthetics.

"I want to know what's happening," she said. "I want to know it. See it. Feel it."

Other priorities in how the office was laid out at the time included having the reception area channel into the conference room where Barber and others put on presentations. The library was pushed to the back of the offices. Studios for other employees, including top talent, were scattered about in a space that had an industrial bent to it and faced out over windows. Red was a common wall color.

Times were changing and Barber began to envision the future of her firm. She realized it meant less about her and more about building a team of serious senior people.

"It's all about me but a star can't be a star unless you have a team behind it," she said.

To that end, Barber made another big move. She hired Rebecca Udell, who now serves as president and became a partner last year. "She is my future," Barber said.

She formed a strategic plan to guide the firm's growth, and she needed the space to reflect the firm's future ambitions. A devotee of the Chinese philosophy of feng shui, Barber wanted the space to be arranged in a manner that would help people reach goals and create a sense of harmony.

CHALLENGES: The biggest hurdle may well have been making such drastic changes in a small space in such a short period of time. To adhere to a feng shui method, the space needed to be totally revamped, and though it took eight weeks to plan, the offices were totally redone in about a month. "I've never before changed a floor plan so dramatically and lived in it," Barber said.

GETTING IT ACCOMPLISHED: Barber enlisted Melani Lewandowski, a feng shui expert and consultant, to give feng shui readings to employees and to assess the space and its "energy." Lewandowski determined that Barber needed to relocate her desk to the rear of the office and bring the library up to the front. Offices that used to face the windows were positioned inward to improve communication and prevent the flow of thought from "escaping." Udell was given a bigger office to accommodate her growing role at the firm.

Barber's red — which represented to her quick, fiery energy — was replaced with earth colors or a more muted shade. For example, in the reception area, a red wall was repainted gold and a picture of a barren tree with no leaves was replaced with a picture that had hues of green to represent growth and money. Shades of orange and blue were incorporated throughout the office and walls. The consultant recommended painting a wall that breaks up the reception area and employee work space with a series of words that underscore Barber's new branding theme: Designing for the new economy. All of the words begin with Re- as in Re-New, Re-Vitalize, Re-Solve and Re-Creat.

The exercise and revamping, though just weeks old, have started to have an impact.

"It brought clarity," Udell said. "It has already helped in our design and communication."

— *Natalie Kostelni*

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